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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 November 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Sino-Soviet Relations -- The New Game

Much of the attached memorandum is necessarily of an interim and highly speculative nature, and we have not attempted to coordinate it, even within CIA. We do feel that it contains enough interesting analysis to be worth bringing to your attention.



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SUMMARY

The Soviets and Chinese have clearly retreated from the split Khrushchev had scheduled for December. They have restored high level contacts and established the basis for a new dialogue. They now appear to have a mutual interest in quieting down their dispute and seeking a practical working arrangement. Neither side, however, is likely to make concession on fundamental issues.

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1. Nothing dramatizes the consequences of Khrushchev's fall from power as much as Chou En-Lai's appearance atop the Lenin mausoleum for the 47th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. Many observers are bound to conclude that Khrushchev was removed precisely to make such a journey to Moscow possible. Whether this is in fact the case is far from clear, but it is evident that some

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new intricate Sino-Soviet maneuvering has begun, less than a month after Khrushchev's political demise.

2. The origins of the Chou En-Lai mission are still obscure. The Soviets have let it be known to other parties that the Chinese sought the invitation, and put some pressure on the Soviets by indicating that other Communist states should be informed of the request. Naturally, the new Soviet team could not refuse without immediately taking the blame for intransigent perpetuation of the quarrel. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the Soviets made known their interest in bilateral talks with the Chinese when they conferred with Gomulka.

3. Both sides have made some concessions. Direct public polemics have been stopped, and cordial messages published. The Chinese ignored the slight of the Albanians and the presence of Tito's representatives. The Soviets initially drew back from Khrushchev's project for a 26-party drafting commission to meet in mid-December, and have offered a new formula for a series of short meetings and consultations. Both sides have laid the ground work for shifting much of the blame for past differences onto Khrushchev, much as he sluffed off the conflict with Tito onto Beria in 1955.

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4. The conduct of both powers has already changed considerably. Contacts which were broken off in mid-1963 have been re-established. The atmosphere of mutual recriminations has been dispelled at least temporarily by the public display of cordiality in Moscow. The private talks could be the basis for a continuing dialogue. In effect, neither side has chosen to proceed toward the split which was coming in December, but it is far from clear how they will proceed from this new starting point.

The Main Issues

5. Khrushchev. Before the two parties can go very far in their discussions the historical role of Khrushchev must be decided. The Chinese have already baited the Soviets by attributing Khrushchev's overthrow to his betrayal of "proletarian internationalism, the path of the October revolution, and the interests of the Soviet people." They have warned that the "people" will also "spurn" any other leaders who follow Khrushchev's line. It is impossible for the Soviet leaders to accept this interpretation without great damage to their position inside the USSR and among their allies in the Communist movement. The most they can do is blame Khrushchev for damaging Soviet-Chinese state relations unnecessarily and for exacerbating the dispute with petty polemics.

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6. Ideology. Even if the Chinese do not press for complete de-Khrushchevization, the two parties are faced with his general policies. The new Soviet leaders must prove their legitimacy by demonstrating continuity with the "general line" of the party. There are three issues which have to be reaffirmed: (1) de-Stalinization, (2) peaceful coexistence and the non-inevitability of war (20th Party Congress), and (3) the Party Program (22nd Party Congress). To repudiate this "general line" would amount to a fundamental change of policy. At the same time, the Chinese hold that the origin of the dispute dates back to the 20th Party Congress, the "gross errors" of de-Stalinization, and the "distortion" of Lenin's concept of peaceful coexistence. Moreover, the CPSU party program was thoroughly denounced by Peiping in June 1963. It is difficult to see how such fundamental propositions can be overturned without paying a high price. If the issues are ignored, then before too long they will be talking at cross purposes, and despite the best of intentions, sliding back into polemics.

7. Authority. One way of deferring substantive resolutions is to use old compromise language from the 1960 Conference and simply reaffirm it. They might do this bilaterally, but the Soviets cannot completely drop the idea of a new conference without appearing weak

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and unsure of their position. In fact, Brezhnev has made a new conference a "necessity." Yet the Chinese will sooner or later require the same concessions as before: unanimity and coordinated preparations -- in other words a Chinese veto.

8. A new obstacle is the Chinese encouragement and acceptance of a number of factions and splinter groups as the legitimate Communist parties in various countries. Two of the parties (India and Brazil) represented on the 26-party drafting commission are split in this way. The Soviets cannot accept such renegades without losing much of the confidence they still hold among pro-Soviet parties. Yet the Chinese will find it difficult to abandon the parties they have sponsored over the past few years. Even if the two Communist powers reached some working agreement, it is by no means certain that they could impose their views on the various national parties, particularly those which have been split into warring factions. In addition, of course, there is the Chinese refusal to accept Tito into the ranks of Communist powers. In other words, the question of authority and discipline is not solved by Khrushchev's departure and cannot be resolved, if at all, without important concessions throughout the Communist world.

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9. The Soviet Position. The above discussion, together with the well known nationalistic aspects of the Sino-Soviet dispute, suggest that no fundamental reconciliation is possible, unless the Soviets are prepared to overturn the Khrushchev era and develop a completely new internal and external policy. As of now, it seems highly unlikely that this would be attempted. The incentive for the new leaders to do so is lacking. On the other hand, there may be considerable incentive for the Soviets to put a much better face on their relations with China. Khrushchev's tactics had reached a dead end. Not only were the Chinese gaining direct support, but Soviet allies were dropping by the wayside. The Soviets need time to try to repair this disarray, particularly in Eastern Europe. By refusing to be taunted into a final break, the Soviets may gain little, but at least they do not court the deliberate defiance of their allies. Finally, the Soviets have been greatly weakened in their diplomacy and international policies by the growing acceptance throughout the world of Sino-Soviet split. If they can not create a semblance of unity they may gain a stronger hand in dealing with the West, and cause considerable concern in anti-Communist ranks.

10. The Chinese Position. One incentive for China to play along with this notion of improving state relations is to relieve

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the pressures on their northern borders. Another incentive is the prospect of economic and military assistance. Kosygin has already indicated that some economic aid may be resumed. Some years ago the Chinese might have been sorely tempted to make concessions for resumption of full scale assistance. Their survival of adversity and their new prestige have made them much readier to resist temptation, and their demands are higher: the Chinese must be granted a co-chairmanship of the international movement; the Soviets must reorient their foreign policy to support Chinese ambitions, and thereby confront the US with a solid front.\*

11. It is likely that the Chinese are shrewder than to present this bill to the Soviets immediately. The Chinese have much to gain by playing down the conflict for the short term and letting the Soviets make the moves either toward a more cordial relationship or back to the brink. As long as there remains doubt as to the future direction of Sino-Soviet relations, the Chinese gain a stronger hand in such matters as the Indian situation, the struggle

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Chinese insistence on implacable hostility toward the US was made evident in a speech at a Soviet Embassy reception on 6 November. Peng Chen, who has conducted some of the polemical debates with the Soviets, said: "In the present international situation the demarcation line between those who want revolution and those who do not is whether or not they oppose US imperialism ... those (like Khrushchev) who attempt to obscure this demarcation line have been repudiated."

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for Southeast Asia, and throughout the Communist movement, where divided leadership must even now be casting a wary eye at the pro-Chinese factions.

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12. In sum, both sides have an interest in quieting down the dispute. The Chinese will capitalize on the fall of Khrushchev and the disarray this has already produced among various Communist parties. They will also wait for further changes, if any, in the Soviet leadership. They need not make any concessions, other than dropping their pointed polemics and simply reaffirming their positions. They are probably confident that the Soviet position will weaken and that Soviet authority will be further damaged. Any concessions from Brezhnev & Co. of course will be pocketed, with an awareness that this too weakens the Soviets in the eyes of their hitherto loyal followers.

13. The mere fact of starting talks may have put the Soviets at a tactical disadvantage. While the Chinese are under no pressure to make major concessions, the new Soviet team is under pressure to show that they can handle things better than Khrushchev. Unless they call a quick halt to the Chinese dialogue and insist on the correctness

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of their positions, they may fall into a trap. The closer they come to an agreement the greater the pressure not to take the blame for upsetting it and the greater the temptation to bring the Chinese problem under control with concessions. Perhaps Chinese arrogance will save the Soviets in the end, as in 1963 when the Chinese deliberately challenged Khrushchev on the eve of the bilateral talks in Moscow. But if the Chinese string out the discussions the good faith of the Soviets can be badly damaged among those Communists and non-Communist powers who have accepted the Sino-Soviet dispute as a profound conflict of principles. Brezhnev and his cohorts will look more and more unprincipled and devious.

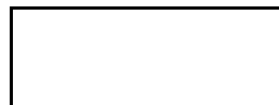
14. The Chinese issue must be a matter of serious debate and conflict within the new Soviet leadership. There are already signs that the maneuvering for position is intensifying, and a new upheaval at the top seems inevitable. Brezhnev is emerging as the champion of Communist unity. But there are other signs that a new approach to China is being resisted. For example, someone sponsored the publication of anti-Chinese statements in Pravda several days after Khrushchev's fall. The first Secretary of the Ukraine, a protege of Podgorny's spoke out against the Chinese, but his remarks were suppressed by Pravda. Podgorny is on record, two days before the

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anti-Khrushchev coup, with a vicious indictment of the Chinese. If Brezhnev is vulnerable to eventual charges of bungling or weakening the Soviet position, he could just as easily attack others for softness in the face of the common enemy. It is possible that there are Soviet leaders who believe a reconciliation with China goes hand in hand with the revival of a more orthodox ideology inside the USSR. Until this internal power play is resolved it is doubtful that we can estimate the course of Sino-Soviet relations with much confidence.

15. The present pause cannot go on indefinitely, however. Even if a conference is set aside the new Soviet leaders must convene a party congress by next fall at the latest. By this first post-Khrushchevian congress, they probably need to know the future direction of their relations with China.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



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